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Residents' Propensity for Tourism Advocacy, a Place Identity Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Host community's perceptions of tourism impacts have been widely discussed in tourism literature, however, little attention has been paid to residents' role in supporting and advocating inward tourism, especially whether residents' identity with their living place has a significant effect on their advocacy for incoming tourism. This study posits that residents' social identity can play a significant role in predicting their involvement and intent behavior in supporting and advocating tourism. One specific purpose of this study is to explore how the social identity components, i.e. the cognitive and affective identities can prompt residents to be more actively involved in tourism support and promotion. Another purpose is to propose and test a conceptual model which depicts specific relations between residents' social identity and their involvement in tourism advocacy. The significance and implications of this study are discussed.

Keywords: *place identity, social identity theory, residents, tourism advocacy*

INTRODUCTION

To induce employees to project brand identity, organizations engage in employee branding (Edwards, 2005; Harquail, 2005). As employees identify with the organization, their interests become aligned with the organization's interests. A brand identity will be more attractive to the employee if it provides him or her with the opportunity for satisfying any of these self-related motives by associating themselves with it. The ultimate goal of employee branding is to have employees incorporate the brand's identity attributes into their own self-concepts, so that self-concept related motives can provide an unobtrusive, unproblematic engine for brand-expressive behavior. Much research in the context of tourism has assessed the effects of brand identity and attitude formation of visitors toward a destination brand and their subsequent travel behaviors (e.g. Chon, 1991; Crompton, 1990; Jenkins, 1999; Prayag, 2009). Much less attention, however, has been paid to the attitudes and identification of local residents (Schroeder, 1996).

The notion of a brand identity to employees is equivalent to the notion of a place identity to residents. To effectively boost urban tourism, tourism planners must have a good understanding of the residents' perceptions and attitudes toward their living place. Previous studies suggest that a person's identity influences his/her attitudes and behaviors (Hagger, Anderson, Kyriakaki, & Darkings, 2007). The nature and strength of residents' place identity and attachment to community, and to surrounding landscapes, may influence how residents perceive potential impacts of a growing tourism industry and may be important determinants of successful coexistence between residents and the tourism industry (McCool & Martin, 1994). Addressing the place-based views and concerns of residents is critical in maintaining public support for tourism (Andereck & Vogt, 2000). The active support of host communities can be crucial for successful tourism development (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004). Understanding local residents'

attitudes toward their living place is believed to be fundamental to the sustainability of efforts to promote inward tourism.

In terms of the relationship between tourism development and residents' role, host community's perceptions towards tourism impacts have been widely discussed in tourism literature (Brougham and Butler 1981, Allen et al. 1988, Dieke 1989, Perdue et al. 1990, Ap 1992, Jurowski, Uysal & Williams, 1997, Schroeder 1996, Chen 2000, Chen & Hsu, 2002, Lui 2003, Harrill 2004, Gursoy and Rutherford 2004, Andereck et al. 2007, Diedrich et al. 2009, Lee et al. 2010, Cu and Ryan 2011, Vargas-Sanchez et al. 2011, and Nunkoo and Gursoy 2012). Relatively, little attention has been paid to residents' role in supporting and promoting inward tourism, especially whether residents' identity with their community has a significant effect on their advocacy for incoming tourism (Schroeder, 1996; Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012), in particular their advocacy for tourism through word of mouth.

This study is designed to explore relations between residents' place identity and their propensity for tourism advocacy based on the social identity theory (SI). One specific purpose of this study is to explore how SI's two major components, i.e. the cognitive and affective identities can prompt residents to be more actively involved in tourism support and promotion. Another purpose is to propose and test a conceptual model which depicts specific relations between the SI principles and residents' tourism advocacy behaviors.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An identity is "a set of meanings attached to the self that serves as a standard or reference that guides behavior in situations" (Stets & Biga, 2003, p. 401). Since the affective perception is generated from the psychological process (meanings and attachments) rooted in the setting, the identity of place is determined not only by the physical components but also the meaning and association developed between people and place (Bott, 2003). In place-behavior studies, three identity theories have been used in recent decades to explain the relationship between place and identity, and impact of place on identity. One is the place-identity theory. According to Proshansky (1978), aspects of identity linked to place can be described as "place-identity." Place-identity is described as the individual's incorporation of place into the larger concept of self (Proshansky, Fabian & Kaminoff, 1983). Proshansky's place-identity theory provides a good foundation in understanding the relationship between place and identity. The second is the identity process theory. In terms of the formation process of identity, Breakwell (1986) formulates an identity process theory in which identity is seen as a dynamic, social product of the interaction of the capacities for memory, consciousness and organized construal which are guided by different principles including distinctiveness, continuity, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The third related theory is the social identity theory which focuses more on the interrelationship between place, place attachment and individuals' pride and self-esteem.

Tajfel (1972: 292) defined social identity (SI) as "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership." Tajfel (1982) explains "social identity" as the individual's knowledge of belonging to certain social groups, as well as the emotions and values this conveys to him or her. Social identity depends on the quality of the groups or entities we belong to or have as a positive reference, such as nationality, culture,

religion, family, neighborhood, etc. Social identity theory (SIT) is primarily described as a theory that predicts certain intergroup behaviors based on individuals' social identification. Sukoco and Wu (2010) suggest that the strength of residents' SI is positively related to their likelihood of sharing their knowledge with non-locals.

Tajfel proposed that the groups (e.g. social class, family, football team etc.) which people belonged to were an important source of pride and self-esteem. For residents, the neighborhood, living place or the whole city can be a very important source of self-esteem. Self-esteem refers to a positive evaluation of oneself or the group with which one identifies. With regard to place identity, Korpela (1989, Twigger-Ross & Uzzell 1996) shows that a place's favorite environments can support self-esteem. Twigger-Ross & Uzzell stresses that self-esteem differs from simply positively evaluating a place, in that it suggests that person gains a boost to his/her self-esteem from the qualities of the place. Gu & Ryan (2007) postulates that being a city's resident can either be a source of pride if the resident feels it a boost to his or her self-esteem, or alternatively a source of dissatisfaction if this city always reminds him or her something negative.

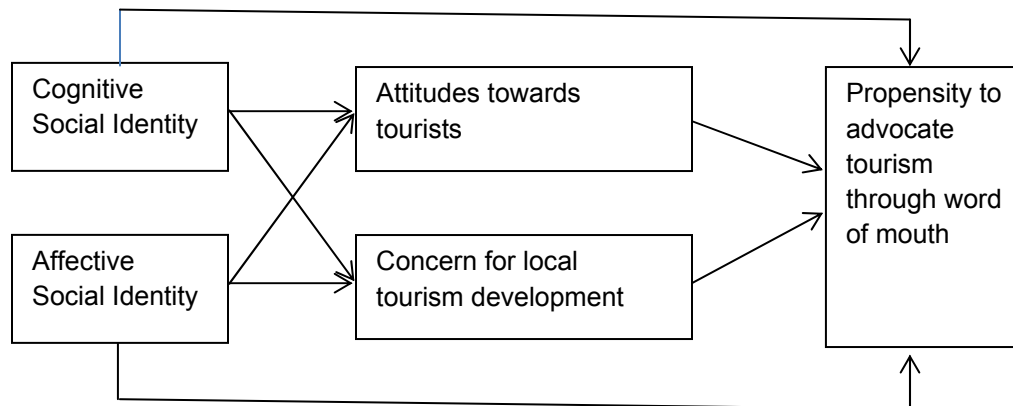
According to Albert et al.(1998), original conceptualizations of SI included both cognitive and affective components. Cognitively, social identities provide a way for individuals to place themselves and others in society such that individuals define themselves as organization members. Affectively, social identities provide a sense of pride in and belongingness to the group, and reflect the value of that identity to the group member. Identity can be predominately cognitive, referring to evaluations based on identification with practical benefits associated with the area; or emotive, referring to deeply held but not necessarily rational beliefs about the area, for example imputed historical associations of the area (Ollins, 2000). The cognitive component is associated with a cognitive awareness of one's membership in a social group or self-categorization (Ellemers, et al., 1999). The affective component relates to the emotional aspect of social identification.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) suggest individuals involve themselves in group activities to satisfy an underlying need for self-enhancement and increase in self-esteem. Positive feelings and a deep identification with the destination brand is likely to increase community participation in local tourism attractions (Key & Pillai, 2006). Research has suggested that positive word-of-mouth is more frequently exchanged between individuals than negative word-of-mouth and that it is more likely to influence buyer behavior than printed media (Ang & Buttle, 2006; Reichheld, 2006). The opposite of positive word-of-mouth can occur where residents do not identify with the tourism values of the area, leading to increased tension, hostility, and suspicion towards visitors (Mirbabayev & Shagazatova, 1999). It is noted that 'organic' information (e.g. from community members via word-of-mouth) has more credibility than induced sources (e.g. official tourist brochures) (Garner, 1993). Litvin et al. (2008) observed that the role of word-of-mouth in advocating destinations to potential tourists has long been recognized as one of the most influential information sources to potential tourists.

In short, previous studies suggest that a person's identity influences his/her attitudes and behaviors (Hagger, Anderson, Kyriakaki, & Darkings, 2007). Nunkoo and Gursoy (2012) note that residents' identities influence their support for tourism, and that self-identity is a good determinant of behavior. They furthermore propose that identity theory should be considered a more general theory than attitude-based ones (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012). This study, by applying

the social identity theory to the context of tourism, posits that there exist positive relationships between place identity, residents' involvement in support for tourism and their propensity for tourism advocacy, in particular through word of mouth as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Proposed Model and Hypothetical Relations



RESEARCH METHODS

City governments have often viewed urban tourism as an important tool in restoration and revitalization of economic development that results in improved quality of life for residents and visitors alike (Bianchini, 1993). Ellis (2003) observed that some highly developed cities have used urban tourism for the purpose of generation of civic pride, raising the city profile, and attracting inward investment. Since about a decade ago, the Cultural Development Commission in Indianapolis has been set up aiming to position the city nationally and globally as an urban cultural tourism destination (Payne 2010). It established the Indianapolis Cultural Tourism Initiative to support and encourage a cultural environment, help improve the quality of life for Indianapolis residents, and enhance visitors' experience. However, since then, there is no indication of remarkable achievements made as a result of the long promotional efforts (Wang, Yamada, & Brothers 2011). Wang et al. find out that one of the main reasons for this is the lack of substantial support from the local residents to advocate urban tourism and suggest that, if the city gains more support from its residents, it will be much more marketing-effective in promoting the city's cultural tourism. The attitudes and intent behavior of residents towards urban tourism are very important because interactions between visitors and residents have a significant effect on visitors' satisfaction with the destination (Pizam *et al.*, 2000).

A self-administered questionnaire is designed to measure Indianapolis residents' social identity and their involvement in support and advocacy for tourism development. Given that very limited information about the application of SIT in tourism is available (Nunkoo and Gursoy, 2012), scales for measuring cognitive social identity ('cog' in short) and affective social identity ('aff') in the context of tourism, residents' concern for local tourism development ('cnn'), their attitudes towards incoming tourists ('att') and their propensity for tourism advocacy via word of

mouth ('wom') are developed based on the previous studies. All the attitudinal and identity items are measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

After the survey instrument is designed, it is presented to a group of senior college students majoring in tourism management who are also Indianapolis residents. The students are asked to comment on the relevance of the items to Indianapolis hence suggestions regarding the phrasing of statements are made. These are taken into account and the design of the questionnaire gets refined. A pilot test is conducted to further examine the appropriateness of the item wording, the overall design of the survey instrument, the measurement validity and the construct reliability. One purpose of the pretest is to establish a uni-dimensional scale for the measurement of the constructs. To detect scale dimensionality, an exploratory factor analysis with principal component method is conducted by using SPSS for each construct in order to ensure that each factor identified by the exploratory factor analysis has only one dimension (with the criteria of each item's factor loadings $\geq .40$ and each construct's Cronbach's alpha value $\geq .70$). As a result, a total of 15 items are used to test the proposed model.

A convenience sampling technique is used for data collection. The target subjects are the Indianapolis residents who are at least 18 years old. Data are collected by research assistants in October, 2012 in the city of Indianapolis along the newly constructed Cultural Trail in nine different locations. People who were walking/jogging or having other leisure activities along the trail were intercepted and asked if they were Indianapolis residents and would like to participate in the survey. Only those who were non-visitors and expressed willingness of participation were given the questionnaires to fill out. As a result, a total of 203 usable surveys are collected. With all the data being collected, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is conducted through LISREL (version 8.80) to test the proposed model, by firstly examining scale validity from the measurement model using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) based on the construct reliabilities, average variance extracted and correlations among the constructs; and secondly focusing on testing the proposed hypotheses using the structural model. The goodness of fit indicators demonstrating a good fit for the structural model will be inspected based on the indices of χ^2/df , p-value, GFI, CFI, and RMSEA.

RESULTS

About half of the respondents are young residents (18-25 years old – 30%; 26-35 years old – 21%) and the other half are middle aged or senior residents (36-45 years old – 20%; 46-55 years old – 16.5%, over 55 years old – 12.5%). More women (52.7%) than men (47.3%) participated in this survey. In terms of their ethnic background, the majority of the respondents are white (76.2%), followed by African (11.9%) and Hispanic (5%). 25.7% of the respondents reported to earn a household income below \$30,000, 39.1% between \$30,000 and \$60,000, 20.3% between \$60,001 and \$90,000, and 14.9% above \$90,000, respectively.

Since the items are not theory-based but more of a result of exploratory search, the exploratory factor analysis is applied by using Principal Factor Analysis to the social identity items and the tourism-related activity items, respectively to examine the underlying dimensions of these items. As a result, two 'social identity' factors and two 'tourism-related activity factors' were identified using varimax rotation, each explaining 71.549% and 68.404% of the variances. In terms of 'social identity', the first factor is labeled as 'cognitive identity' which is in line with the literature. The second factor was named 'affective identity'.

Derived from residents' tourism-related activity items, the first factor is labeled as 'concerns about the local tourism development,' and the second factor is named 'attitudes towards tourists'. Two items were used to measure residents' intention to promote tourism through word-of-mouth. Their internal consistency was tested which is .756 (see Table 1). The exploratory factor analysis justifies the appropriateness of having these constructs for in the subsequent SEM analyses.

Table 1
Exploratory Factor Analysis and Reliability Test

<i>Factor Analysis of Social Identity Items</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>		<i>Communalities</i>
	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	
<i>F1: Cognitive Identity (loglv)</i>			
I identify myself as a Hoosier (cog1)	.804		.756
I am like other Hoosiers (cog2)	.920		.863
I am one of the Hoosiers (cog3)	.793		.713
<i>F2: Affective identity (afflv)</i>			
I respect Hoosiers (aff1)		.739	.574
I am glad to tell others that I am a Hoosier (aff2)		.810	.699
I like being a Hoosier (aff3)		.775	.688
Eigenvalue	3.291	1.002	
Variance explained (total: 71.549%)	54.857	16.69	
Cronbach's alpha	0.855	0.730	
<i>Factor Analysis of residents' involvement in tourism-related activities</i>	<i>Factor Loadings</i>		<i>Communalities</i>
	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>	
<i>F1: Concern for local tourism development (cnnlv)</i>			
I like to visit tourist attractions of the state ((cnn1)	.844		.772
I am glad to see new tourism development in the state (cnn2)	.831		.764
I like to help promote my state's tourism if needed (cnn3)	.697		.510
<i>F2: Attitudes towards tourists visiting local community (attlv)</i>			
I like to make tourists feel welcome when visiting our state (att1)		.711	.756
I am happy to help tourists visiting my community (att2)		.714	.659
I would feel guilty if I did not interact with tourists visiting my community (att3)		.843	.711
I think interacting with tourists is a good way to show Hoosiers' friendliness (att4)		.697	.616
Eigenvalue	3.822	1.000	

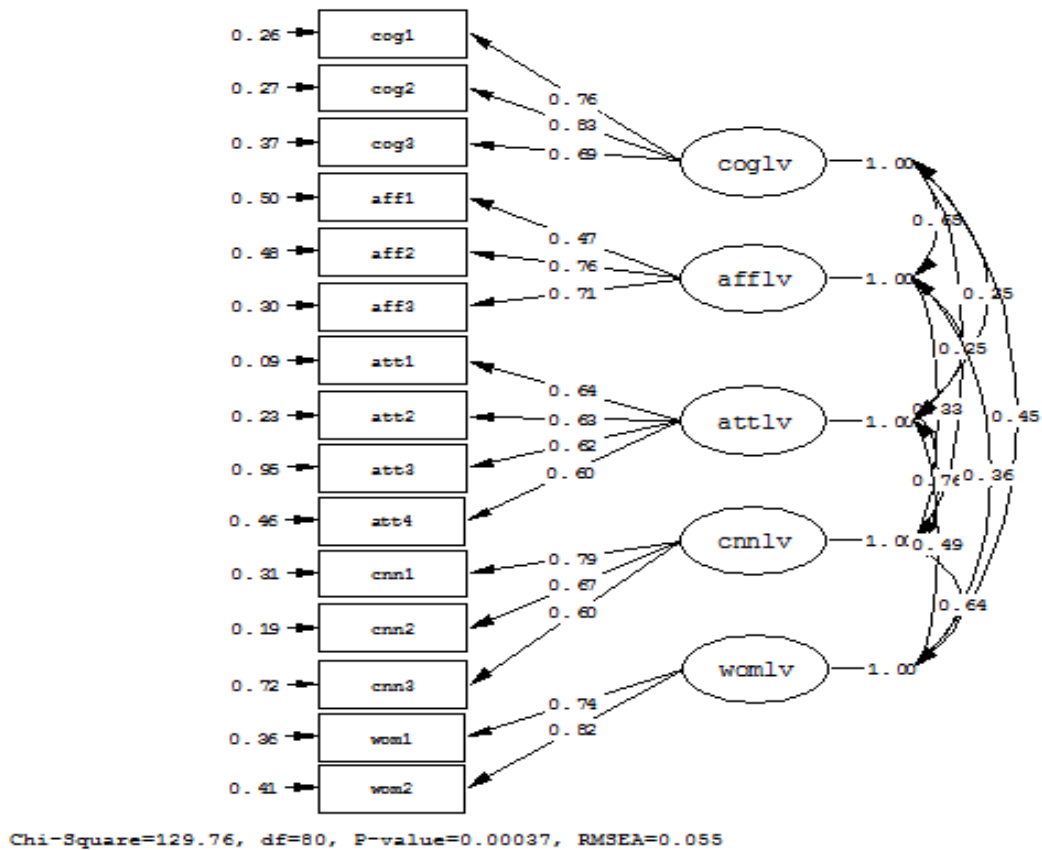
Variance explained (total: 68.404%)	54.594	13.81
Cronbach's alpha	0.769	0.79
<i>Reliability Test of Propensity for Tourism Advocacy via Word of Mouth Items</i>		
<hr/>		
I will tell more people about the tourist attractions in my state (wom1)		
I like to tell tourists details about the tourist attractions of my state (wom2)		
Cronbach's alpha: 0.756		
<hr/>		

SEM is used to first examine the measure model showing that all the items load substantively on their respective constructs (all the loadings above 0.50 except aff1 which is 0.47). The t-values of the factor loadings indicate all the items are loaded significantly on their underlying constructs demonstrating convergent validity. The average variances extracted by each construct are 0.66, 0.51, 0.47, 0.54 and 0.61, with almost all exceeding the recommended 50%, indicating that more than half of the variance is accounted for by the constructs. The composite reliabilities are 0.85, 0.75, 0.78, 0.78 and 0.76, indicating internal consistency. The Comparative Fix Index (CFI) is 0.97. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.055 which shows a good fit (MacCallum et al. 1996). Thus the measurement model fit was considered to be adequate. The proposed structural model is then estimated ($\chi^2=204.59$, $df=81$; $\chi^2/df=2.53$, $P>.10$, $CFI=.93$, $RMSEA=.087$) (see Figure 3). The CFI is within an acceptable limit and RMSEA provides a mediocre fit (MacCallum et al., 1996), suggesting that the overall performance of the structural model is acceptable. The proposed model explains 44% of the variance in 'propensity for tourism advocacy' (see Figures 2 and 3).

The results empirically evidence some positive relationships between residents' social identity and their support for tourism. Specifically, residents' affective identity shows a significant influence on their concern for tourism development in the city ($\beta=.26$, $t=2.07$, $p<.05$), and further indicates a significant impact on their attitudes towards the tourists ($\beta=.21$, $t=1.74$, $p<.05$). The results also show that the residents' concern for local tourism development have a significant influence on their propensity to advocate through word of mouth ($\beta=.47$, $t=5.01$, $p<.01$). As for residents' cognitive identity, it shows a direct positive relationship with residents' propensity for tourism advocacy ($\beta=.27$, $p<.01$).

As a result, all the significant paths are summarized as follows: a) Residents' cognitive social identity (coglv) has direct and positive influence on their propensity for tourism advocacy via word-of-mouth (womlv); b) Residents' affective social identity (afflv) has positive influence on their attitudes towards incoming tourists (attlv); c) Residents' affective social identity (afflv) has positive influence on their concern for local tourism development (cnnlv); d) Residents' concern for local tourism development (cnnlv) has positive influence on their propensity for tourism advocacy via word-of-mouth (womlv); and e) The affective social identity's (afflv) influence on residents' propensity for tourism advocacy via word-of-mouth (womlv) is mediated by residents' concern for local tourism development (cnnlv). Social identity is thus found to play a positive role in determining residents' support for tourism activities as well as their propensity for tourism advocacy (see Figure 4).

Figure 2
Assessment of the Measurement Model



DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This study reveals a direct positive relationship between residents' social cognitive identity and their propensity to advocate incoming tourism as well as an indirect relationship between their affective identity and propensity of tourism advocacy through the mediating variable of 'concern for local tourism development.' This study provides an empirical evidence to stress the importance of place identity study in destination marketing and hence to recommend that tourism marketers and researchers should have a good understanding of not only the destination and/or brand image so as to know how to create a distinctive and attractive destination to visitors; but also the place identity hold by the local residents to ensure a more effective marketing and promotion with residents' active involvement at least by means of word-of-mouth tourism advocacy and support. Tourism is essentially a place-based phenomenon involving the production of destination identity at different scales (Hall 1998). Tourism organizations at different levels are always actively engaged in presenting and promoting place identity in order to attract tourists and increase market share (Dredge & Jenkins, 2003). As for the city of Indianapolis, one initial step is to identify the city's place identity and cultivate it among the local residents.

Figure 3
Assessment of the Structural Model

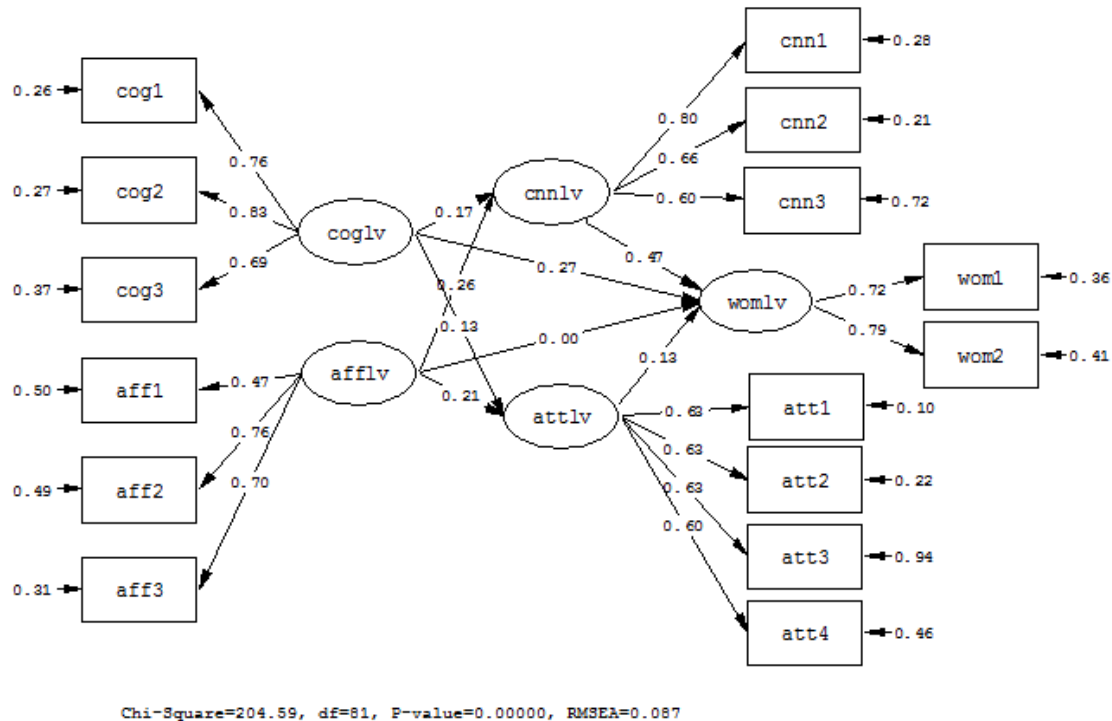
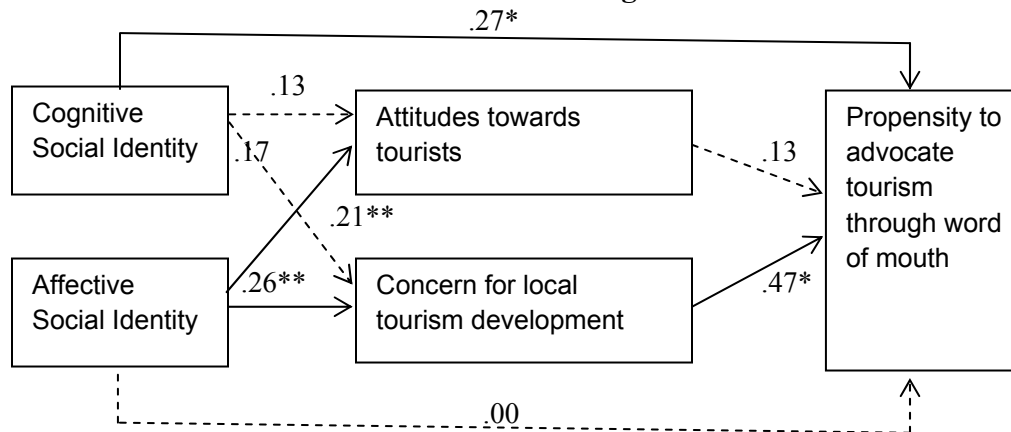


Figure 4.
Illustration of Significant Paths



(*: $p < 0.01$, **: $p < 0.05$; Solid lines indicate significant paths whereas dotted lines indicate insignificant paths).

This study indicates that a strong social identity may instigate residents' positive attitudes towards tourists and their concern for local tourism development which will consequently enhance the attractiveness of the city as an urban tourism destination. As a result, an important means by which Indianapolis tourism planners and marketers can seek to maximize residents' advocacy and support for tourism is to enhance residents' place identity, i.e. residents' identifications reflecting their self-esteem, which in turn will lead to residents' more active

involvement in tourism advocacy. On one hand, positive behavior by residents can add to the appeal of an area on the basis of authenticity and a welcoming attitude (Lawson & Williamson, 2001); on the other hand, however, negative attitudes towards visitors can result in an antipathetic or obstructive attitude to tourists, manifested through formal and informal activities to discourage further visits (Mirbabayev & Shagazatova, 1999). Thus a successful tourism organization's functions should nurturing and promoting local residents' place identity.

It has been suggested that residents' likelihood of supporting incoming tourism, and their willingness to spread positive messages via word-of-mouth is influenced by the image they perceive of their area and their identification with it (Schroeder, 1996); and if local residents become more aware of the positive characteristics of their regions, they are more likely to become ambassadors (Schroeder, 1996). Likewise, a place identity will be more attractive to the residents if it provides him or her with the opportunity for satisfying any of their self-esteem and other self-related motives by associating themselves with it. Hence it is recommended that residents be stimulated to actively participate in tourism marketing activities which should be compatible with the construction of their social identity.

Theoretically, the proposed model and hypothetical relations which are empirically proved to be significant will serve as a good foundation for future studies in the same area on the same topic. In addition, this study represents an initial effort in exploring the relationship between place identity and residents' support for tourism. However, the study of individuals' place identity and its application in tourism is complex, in terms of place-based studies, for instance, the social identity theory is limited by the dominance of self-esteem as the only principle of identity (Twigger-Ross & Uzzelle, 1996). Given the limitation of the social identity theory, Breakwell's (1986) identity process theory suggests that we do not need a special identity theory to explain the influence place has on identity and further suggests that we assess not only self-esteem but also other three principles including place's distinctiveness, continuity and self-efficacy. Thus it is recommended that more empirical studies be necessary to refine and consolidate the structural model in terms of how place identity would determine residents' intent behavior to advocate tourism.

Finally, about the study itself, the researchers want to caution that the data are collected with a convenience sampling approach and therefore might not be representative to the population. This limitation may possibly restrict the ability to generalize the findings.

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